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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-17 (cancelled)

Claim 18 (currently amended) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 17 29 wherein the structure elastic element advances the portion of the bearing shell toward the first axial end of the joint housing for wedging the portion of the bearing shell further into the a gap formed between the ball head and the joint housing adjacent the ball stud at the first axial end of the joint housing as wear to the portion of the bearing shell occurs.

Claims 19-21 (withdrawn)

Claim 22 (currently amended) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 17 29 wherein the bearing shell includes a deformable area, the deformable area enabling the bearing shell to be adapted for use with joint housings of varying tolerances.

Claim 23 (currently amended) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 17 29 wherein the bearing shell includes

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separate and distinct first and second parts, the first part being an upper shell and the second part being a lower shell.

Claim 24 (currently amended) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 23 wherein the structure elastic element includes a spring element that is arranged between the upper shell and the lower shell, the lower shell being the portion of the bearing shell that is ~~wedged into the gap~~ plastically deformed.

Claim 25 (previously added) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 24 wherein the spring element is a wave-shaped spring washer.

Claim 26 (cancelled)

Claim 27 (currently amended) The ball-and-socket joint as claimed in claim 30 wherein the collar includes deformable areas, the deformable areas of the collar enabling a combination of the upper shell, the spring element, and the lower shell to be adapted for use with joint housings of varying tolerances.

Claim 28 (cancelled)

Claim 29 (new) A ball-and-socket joint comprising:

a joint housing having first and second axial ends;

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a ball head provided with a ball stud extending from the ball head;

a bearing shell having elastic properties and being received in the joint housing whereby receiving the ball head, the ball stud extending outward of the first axial end of the joint housing;

a housing cover for closing the second axial end of the joint housing; and

an elastic element interposed between the housing cover and at least a portion of the bearing shell preloading the portion of the bearing shell to urge the portion of the bearing shell toward the first axial end of the joint housing thereby plastically deforming the portion of the bearing shell into its final ball-shaped contour.

Claim 30 (rewritten claim 26) A ball-and-socket joint comprising:

a joint housing having first and second axial ends; a ball head with a ball stud extending from the ball head, the ball head being received in the joint housing and the ball stud extending outward of the first axial end of the joint housing, a gap being formed between the ball head and the joint housing adjacent the ball stud at the first axial end of the joint housing;

a bearing shell received in the joint housing for supporting the ball head for tilting relative to the joint housing;

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a housing cover for closing the second axial end of the joint housing; and

structure interposed between the housing cover and at least a portion of the bearing shell and acting upon the portion of the bearing shell to urge the portion of the bearing shell toward the first axial end of the joint housing and, in response to wear of the portion of the bearing shell, to wedge the portion of the bearing shell into the gap,

the bearing shell including separate and distinct first and second parts, the first part being an upper shell and the second part being a lower shell,

the upper shell, which is located further from the first axial end of the joint housing than the lower shell, including a collar that is wedged between the housing cover and a shoulder of the joint housing and prevents movement of the upper shell relative to the joint housing.

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AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

A Proposed Drawing Amendment, including a red ink marked copy of the drawings, was mailed with the Amendment After Final dated April 17, 2003. The Proposed Drawing Amendment was not entered.

It is respectfully requested that the Proposed Drawing Amendment be entered with this amendment.